

A

S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D before the
K I N G and Q U E E N
A T
W H I T E - H A L L

A P R I L XVI. 1690.

B E I N G T H E
F A S T - D A Y.

Vox
By the Right Reverend Father in God,
S T M O N Lord Bishop of Chichester.

Published by their Majesties Special Command.

L O N D O N,
Printed for Richard Chiswell, at the Rose and Crown
in St. Paul's Church-Yard, MDCXC.

THE
BISHOP of CHICHESTER's
FAST-SERMON

Before the

KING and QUEEN

APRIL xvi. 1690.

1860

1860

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A
S E R M O N
Preached before the
K I N G and Q U E E N
A T
W H I T E - H A L L,
April 16. 1690.
BEING THE
F A S T - D A Y.

PROV. xiv. 34.

Righteousness exalteth a nation : but Sin is a reproach to any people.

IF we enlarge our thoughts beyond our own narrow particular beings, and look upon our selves as Members of a Community ; we cannot but think it our interest to indeavour its safety, no less than the preservation of our natural body : Whose health ought not to be dearer to us, than the

prosperous and flourishing estate of the Countrey where we live.

Which if we heartily wish (as we seem to do by our assembling here together to implore the Blessing of Heaven upon their Majesties, and the Forces they employ for our preservation) it concerns us to apply our selves unto the serious use of all those means, which we see to be necessary for the making our Prayers successful.

Now there is no Book in the Holy Scriptures, which gives us fuller directions, in the way to make, not only private *Persons*, and *Families*, but whole *Kingdoms* and *States* happy, than this of *Solomon*: who comprises them all in this general Maxime here in my Text, *Righteousness exalteth a nation*, &c.

I will not vex our *Translation*, nor examine the exactness of it in the latter part of the Verse, which may be otherwise rendred: But consider the words as an ancient *Proverb*; grounded on great reason, constant observation, and long experience; which assured King *Solomon* of these two things. *First*, Of the certain way and means to make a Nation Great, Honourable and Famous: *Secondly*, on the contrary, of the no less certain way and means to lay it low, and make it base and vile in the eyes of all the World.

These are the two parts of my Text, the *first* of which is expressed in the beginning of the words; *Righteousness exalteth a nation*: That's the way to make it great and glorious. The *second*, in the latter part of the Verse, *sin is a reproach to any people*: That's the way to lay them low, were they never

never so high, in riches, reputation and all other things, before.

The *first* of these being evidently proved, will necessary infer the *second*: And therefore, after a brief explication of what is meant here by *Righteousness*, I shall endeavour, in the rest of my Discourse, to make good the truth of what *Solomon* asserts concerning it; by showing, how a Nation is raised and advanced by Righteousness.

It is certain that *Righteousness* hath a threefold signification in Scripture; yea, in this very Book of the *Proverbs*.

1. Where *first*, it signifies that particular virtue, which we call *Justice* and honest dealing: which consists, in giving to every one, that which properly belongs to him. Thus the Wise Man uses the word in *Prov. XVI.8.* *Better is a little with righteousness, than great Revenues without right.* i. e. A small Estate honestly gotten, is to be preferred before a great one, gotten by fraud and doing wrong to others.

2. Sometimes the signification is enlarged, to include in it another virtue also, *viz. Mercy* and *Charity*. In which sense the Wise man seems to use it (to omit other places) *Prov. XI. 4.* *Riches profit not in the day of wrath* (i. e. in a calamitous time) *but righteousness* (i. e. doing good with our riches) *delivereth from death*; may preserve us in the greatest dangers.

3. But there is another acceptation of these words, which is more comprehensive : Wherein it signifies not only *these*; but all other vertues whatsoever: *Universal obedience to the Laws of God.* And thus it is commonly taken in this Book; particularly, here in my Text, as appears from that which is opposed to it, in the latter part of the words, *viz. Sin.* Which most certainly signifies all sorts of wickednes ; and therefore by *righteousnes* we ought to understand all manner of Vertue : *Piety and Holiness* ; as well as *Justice* and *Mercy*. In one word, *true Religion*: Which I may safely use instead of the word *Righteousness*; as comprehending under it whatsoever is good and vertuous ; which springs from *true Religion* and the fear of God.

Now these things being premised, I shall address my self to the proof of this Proposition : That *true Religion and Piety* (which is the Mother of Justice, Mercy, Moderation, and all other vertues) *exalteth a Nation* : That is, makes it truly great and honourable ; of great power, and in great esteem in the World.

Which it doth (1.) in it self; and (2.) by vertue of its own natural fruits and Consequences : And (3.) by procuring the Bleffing of Divine Providence upon that Countrey where it flourishes.

I. *Firſt,*

I. *What and What is to be done by good men.*

First, I say, Righteousness, that is, true Religion, *in it self*, promotes and advances the glory of a Nation : being, in its own Nature, a truly great, noble, and honourable thing : Which every Man praises and commends in others, though perhaps he doth not love to practise it himself. For who is there, for instance, that doth not rather love and honour a People, than are *just, holy, and devout* ; than a Nation that is merely *rich, powerful, and mighty*? It is possible a Nation may be so for a time, though it do not stand upon the Foundations of Truth, Justice and Piety ; but it is impossible it should last so long : and while it doth continue so, what is its *Power*, without *Piety*, but an ability to do Mischief, and to destroy ; which is hateful to all the World ?

The greatest *Monarchs* have sometimes been the greatest *Spoilers*: Who, though they were feared, yet were never truly honoured. Though they acquired some fame, they never had any Reputation, or Esteem. Though they were cryed up, because dreaded, while alive ; yet they were always scorned, because hated, when they were dead.

Whereas, on the contrary, Religious Princes, such as are Holy towards God, and Merciful towards Men ; sober in their Counsels and Conduct : firm to their Compacts and Promises ; faithful to their Aliances, have always gained

the Love and Honour of all those that read
their Story.

II.

But as Righteousness and True Religion, is *in it self* noble and honourable, highly esteemed by all Men; and thereby a means to make a Nation glorious: so it doth much more promote the glory and interest of it, *by its natural Consequences*; on which I shall longer insist.

I. And that, first of all, because True Religion and Virtue, *promotes industry*: which is the very Nerves and Sinews of every Commonwealth. It puts every Man into some Calling and Employment (not suffering Princes to live idly) and makes every Calling active and industrious; and Industry gains Wealth and Riches; and Riches gained by honest industry procure Power, Interest, and Reputation in the World. For *in all labour* (saith this wise Man, ver. 23. of this Chapter) *there is profit: but the talk of the lips rendereth only to penury.* Industry and Labour are always beneficial, and bring many advantages along with them: but where time is spent in vain Company and frivolous Discourses, in hearing what every one will tell, and telling again what hath been heard; there follows Poverty, upon such mis-spence of time; and shame and misery follow that. According to that which we read in XII. Chapter 11. *He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons, is void of understanding.* As if he said,

He

He that minds the busines, unto which God and the nature of his Station calls) him, shall want nothing convenient for him: but he who abandons himself to the company of those, who lead vain, idle, and useleſs lives, shall live in shame, and die in beggary ; and ſo betray himself to be a Man void of all underſtanding.

Idle and extravagant perſons, are the very pests of the Commonwealth : who lie as an heavy burden upon the Shoulders of others ; because they live wholly to waste and ſpend, devour and conſume. They eat the fruit of other Mens labours, and drink the Sweat of their Neighbours Brows. Every thing is but a *prey* to them : who are little better than thoſe that rob and ſpoil ; for they live by the Conſumptiōn of other People. Which, by the way, ſhould excite all that have any authority, to correct this Vice, according to the wholſome Laws provided againſt it : which would be a part of that Reformation, on which it is the very buſineſſ of this day to reſolve, as the means to make us an happy Nation.

For, on the other hand, the laborious and induſtrious Man maintains that Station wherein God hath placed him, though never ſo mean, againſt the invasion of want and poverty ; and againſt thoſe dreadful effects of Poverty, which frequently throw a Nation into terrible Convulſions, by producing in it Sedition and Confuſion.

Is not a Nation then beholden to Religion, more than to any thing else, even upon this account; that by putting Men upon Industry and Labour; and making it a piece of Conscience not to waste ones time vainly, it prevents those insufferable mischiefs, which grow out of idleness, sloth and luxury?

Which might be further demonstrated from a known effect of true Religion and the fear of God; which is *Sobriety*, *Moderation*, and *Frugality*: which are both the Parent, and the product of Industry. Which Industry, I might also shew, is not only the Mother of Riches, but of *Wisdom* also, Learning, Knowledge, and Understanding of all manner of things; whether Natural, Moral, Political, or Divine. Which are not gotten by idleness; but constantly procured, in some measure, by labour and pains. That is, some men by their Industry get Wisdom and Knowledge; Others, whose genius lies not that way, get Riches and Wealth; and there are those who get both: and are all highly serviceable unto the Nation; to advance the greatness, the power, the credit, and the glory of it.

But having many things to say, I omit all further Discourse of these Considerations; and desire you,

II. *Secondly*, To consider, that as Righteousness, that is, True Religion promotes *private Industry*, and by that means tends to the advancement of a Nation; so it also disposes Men (which is a far greater thing) to *mind the*

the publick good and honour of the Nation, where they live.

There is no good Man, who hath a true sense of Religion and Vertue, who doth not consider that he was not born merely for himself; but to help forward the good of others also, even of the whole Country whereof he is a Member. For next to the duty we owe unto God who made us all, and unto our *Parents* who brought us into the World, all Virtuous Men have always placed the duty we owe unto *Country*. And the more any Man minds the *first* of these, his duty towards God; the more religiously will he mind the *last*, the safety and honour of his Country. Which ought to be so dear unto us, that no private Friendships, nor the duty our Natural Parents challenge from us, ought in some Cases, to come in competition with it. Thus Men of worth in the several Ages and Nations of the World, have ever thought.

Which makes our shame here, in *England* the greater, who of late years have had so little regard to this, which of all other things ought to have been most affectionately rendered! And what was the reason of it, but an inundation of all manner of Vice and Wickedness upon us? This was the general cause of it. And more particularly, *Sensuality*, *Avarice*, *Ambition*, *Atheism* and *Infidelity* (which are the Fountain of all Vice) are very base and poor spirited things.

For

For a vicious Man is, at the best, but a crafty and subtil Beast; and the Beasts mind nothing but themselves; or that which they look upon as a part of themselves, their young ones; and that only, while they are young.

Who ever knew an Atheist truly useful, or serviceable to his Country? Who can name one that ever lookt much beyond himself and his own private interests and pleasures? And, indeed, how shold he do any thing noble and generous for his Country (when it will expose him to any danger or trouble) who cannot hope for a reward from God for what he doth?

How should an idle Companion, and a sensual Person, a Man abandoned to his ease, his lust, and bodily pleasure, a Man that loves no body but himself; be concerned for the good of his Country? No, let the Laws and Liberties of it, sink or swim; it is alike to him. For let his Relations, Friends, and Family beg or starve; Nay, let his Heir be in danger to ask a morsel of Bread at his Neighbour's Door (for some of these Men are not so good as the Beasts, who have a care of their young ones) he will have his pleasure, when his Lusts have besotted him. They must be fed, and his Vanity must be gratified; as long as he is able to make provision for them. Let shame and infamy, the hatred and ill will of the whole Nation fall upon him, he regards it not: for his whole care is for his own Carkass, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Which

Which is the nature also of Covetous and Ambitious men ; who, to raise themselves, will not stick to ruin their Country. This is most manifestly a very great Plague to the Common-wealth : Where there are many of this sort of men in it.

But now, on the contrary, that holy Religion, which teaches us to love our Neighbours as our selves, and not revengefully, or malitiously to hurt our Enemies ; teaches us much more to love our Country : for the sake of which, the better sort of Heathens did not grudge to deny, nay to hazard themselves, to preserve it in safety. And therefore he who is a good Christian ; that is, lives according to the Laws of our Religion, is of a free, generous, and publick Spirit : willing to lay out himself, nay to suffer for the Common good.

If there be an occasion to serve himself, by diserving the Publick, he will keep his hands clear and pure from such foolish baseness ; and serve his Country faithfully and justly : knowing that therein he most effectually serves himself, and shall gain by it both in this World and in the next.

Thus is that again verified which the man here affirms, as he had done before XI. 11. *By the blessing of the Upright the City is exalted.* Upright Piety highly tends to the advancement of a peoples happiness ; both as it puts men upon labour and industry ; and as it makes them labour for the publick good.

III. Unto which add, in the third place, that Religion and Virtue, makes a Nation strong and powerful: And that, not only by the means before mentioned; but by procuring likewise Unity, Concord, and Agreement among fellow-Citizens and Countrymen: who are preserved by being knit together in Love, but undone by Discord and Dissention.

Now true Religion combines men together, and so makes them mighty and formidable; First, by removing the Causes of division; and Secondly, by making them feel the happy effects of peace and quietness.

The causes of division are Pride, Conceitedness, Self-will, Covetousness, Ambition, Self-love, Hatred, Revenge, and such like Lusts; from whence, as St. James observes, come Quarrelings, and Fightings: That is, from want of true Religion, which would cure men of all these evil qualities: and make them feel themselves happy, in mutual Love, and humble Charity; as well as by the practice of justice and truth.

For no man is either oppressed himself, or hath any inclination to oppress others, when he doth as he would be done by: not only, by abstaining from doing injury to others, because he would not be injured by them; but by relieving, assisting, and doing good to others, because he would be so dealt withal, were he in need of their succour. That is, when true Charity and Brotherly kindness is added unto justice and truth (as it is, where true Religion

gion prevails) in what an happy Condition is that Nation? where every one finds his Neighbours easy and kind to him; and he himself is easy to himself. For when is a Man more at ease, than when he hath no difference with any Body; no Quarrels, no Contention, no Heartburnings, nor evil Surmises: but his Soul is full of Love and Good-will towards others, being knit to them in sincere Affection, not only as his Neighbour, but as his Brethren and Friends.

This is the Effect of True Religion; and the Effect of this is great Peace, and consequently, Prosperity at Home. Where, as Nothing more dishonours a Nation, and indangers it, than Domestick Broils, or opposite Factions; which are always bandying one against the other, to the great damage, as well as disgrace of all: So these are all prevented, or presently quieted by Religion and Virtue; to the great Honour and Glory, both of Religion, and of the Nation, which is so happy as to be under the blessed Influences thereof.

The best Men indeed are liable to great InfirmitieS; which may sometimes make them troublesome unto themselves, and unto others: through Misinformation, through Mistake, through Surprise, through Passion, and the like. But these not being wilful Evils, cannot prove very hurtful, nor be of long continuance. And besides, whēte true Religion possesses the Heart, it makes Men, on one hand, so *charitable*, as to bear and to pardon such InfirmitieS; and, on the other hand, so *humble*, as to make the best amends

amends they can for any Harm they have done by their Mistake or Passion, and to be more careful and kind for the time to come. For that commonly is the Effect of little Quarrels among good Men: who are so much the faster Friends, when they see their Errors, and have begg'd Pardon, and obtained and granted mutual For-givenes.

Would to God it might be the Effect of our lamentable Differences and Contentions, in latter Years (as in all Reason it ought to be) to make us very fearful how we fall into the like again; at least to correct that Sharpness, that Acrimony and Hatred wherewith those Differen-ces were managed; to the great scandal of our Religion, and the exposing us all to be a Prey unto our Common Enemy.

There will be still Occasions of Quarrelling, if we be so foolish as to lay hold on them and im-prove them. For we shall never be all of one Opinion in every thing; which will occasion Disputes; and they may occasion Heats; and they may beget Estrangements one from another; and thence may arise Animosities, and open Breaches: Unless we moderate our selves, and religiously consider what we are a doing, what Mischiefs we are drawing upon our selves, when we engage so fiercely in Contests; about things perhaps of small moment, or things in which Men will never be agreed, but there will be different Judgments concerning them.

Let us, as was said before, be touched with such a lively sense, that we are Members of one and

and the very same Body, and prefer the Publick Good, before our own Private Opinions and Interests; and this will have a greater Power to knit us faster together, than any thing else can have to divide us one from another. If we have any regard to this, to the Safety of our Nation, to the Safety of our Religion, not only here, but in all other Protestant Countries abroad; We cannot but be inclined thereby to join our Counsels, our Studies and Endeavours, as well as our Prayers, for the preventing or quieting of all new Quarrels among us. That, as we had almost undone our selves by our Hatreds and bitter Contentions; so we may be preserved by a firm Union, in sincere Love and brotherly Affection.

Which is a Virtue, that our Holy Religion commands unto us above all other things. *Put on (as the Elect of God, Holy and Beloved) Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a quarrel against any. And above all these things, put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness. And let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, to the which also ye are called in one Body.* Col. 3. 12, 13, &c. Which the same Apostle presses upon the *Philippians*, in the most passionate and moving manner imaginable; (*Phil. 2.1,2.*) *If there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort in Love, (which we cannot but feel to be exceeding great, if we be under the Power of it) if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies;*

Mercies ; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind.

This is sufficient to shew, that if Christian Religion have taken possession of our Hearts, and bear any sway there, we shall be strongly knit together as one Man, for the common Good of the whole Body to which we belong. And if we be, I have demonstrated how much this will contribute to the Exaltation of our Nation, by Unity and Peace at Home.

IV. But suppose a Nation be assaulted from abroad, true Religion will make them *courageous and undaunted*, being the Mother of *Fortitude and Valour*; which raises the Power, Glory, and Reputation of a Nation to the greatest height.

1. And this it doth, because it unites them, as you have heard, in Bands of mutual Loye and Kindness; which gives them confidence in each other, as well as moves them to join their common Counsels and joint Endeavours, for the Publick Good and Safety.

2. And then it makes all these Counsels and Enterprisēs go on smoothly and chearfully, without those Rubs and Impediments which are wont to be raised by Fears, and Jealousies, and Distrusts one of another.

3. And, *thirdly*, by increasing their Treasure, as I have said, and giving them Publick Spirits to incline them to part with it for the Publick Good, it enables them to make such Preparations for

for mutual Defence, as Wisdom and Counsel shall direct.

4. Which Preparations also are managed by Religion, with that Industry, Diligence, and Frugality before-mentioned : Upon which depends great likelihood of good Success. For that Religion which makes a Man industrious in his private Calling, will much more engage him to the diligent and conscientious discharge of any Publick Trust committed to him.

All which tends to inspire a People with Courage, when they see they want Nothing that is necessary for their Defence ; but only the Divine Aid and Succour ; Which, as you shall hear anon, they cannot reasonably suspect, will withdraw it self from a People, fearing God, and working Righteousness. No, quite contrary, they ought to be confident of his Presence with them, especially in all Straits and Difficulties : Which Confidence will marvelously heighten and raise their Courage and Resolution. For as it naturally makes a Man very undaunted and valiant, when he is not conscious to himself of any base Design or vile Practice : So Confidence in God, and full perswasion that he will be with us in an Undertaking, doth exceedingly increase and exalt that Courage which a good Conscience breeds in us. And of this we ought not to doubt, when we are a truly Religious, Just and Holy People ; devoted to the love of God, and of one another.

And as this mightily inspires a Nation with Confidence ; so this unanimous Courage and Con-

Confidence in a Nation, no less daunts their Enemies ; and either deters them from Invasion, or disheartens them in the Attempt : For who is able to stand before a great People, united among themselves ; that fight, not with divided Affections, nor to serve particular Interests and Factions, but for the Common Preservation, and the Publick Good ?

And now that I mention, *a Great People*, it puts me in mind of another thing, which I will briefly touch.

V. True Religion exalteth a Nation, by *increasing it into a multitude of People* : Which evidently gives it Renown, by making a People Powerful, and Formidable to its Neighbours ; especially, when it abounds with People, not of a feeble, but of an able and strong Constitution of Body, as well as of virtuous Minds. For so this wise Man hath observed, a little before my Text, *Verf. 28. In the multitude of People is the King's Honour; but in the want of People, is the destruction of the Prince.* Who is Nothing, if he have no Subjects : but the more numerous they are, the greater is his Force and his Splendor at Home, and his Fame and Reputation A-broad ; which very much depends upon the populousness of his Country, when it is storred with such worthy Persons as I have described.

Now, True Religion increases a People into a Multitude, by *chaste Marriages*, and banishing Fornication and vagrant Lusts : and also by that health-

healthful state of Body, wherein Temperance, Soborness, Chastity and Industry, preserves Mankind. This is so plain, that it needs no Proof; and is one Argument against that Impurity, Filthiness, and Debauchery, which hath exceedingly abounded among us: That it not only shuts Men out of the Happiness of the other World, (as St. Paul shews, 1 Cor. vi. 9.) but hastens them also out of this; weakens and destroys their Bodies; shortens their Life; dispeoples their Country; and makes a Nation feeble and pusillanimous, when it is generally infected with this Disease. Upon which account, it is the interest of all Princes, to punish the Vices of this sort, very severely: not only as displeasing to God, but as extreamly dis-serviceable to themselves.

VI. From all which I might show how, *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, by inviting other People to resort unto it, and increase its Numbers: Either for their Education, or their Improvement, among those who have gained a great Reputation in the World, for their Wisdom, or their Sobriety and Purity, or their Unity and good Government, their Industry, their Courage, &c. and all those excellent Qualities from whence these things are derived.

But I need not add any thing more for the proof of what I undertook. Lay all these Considerations together, and if Wealth, if Wisdom and Knowledg, if unanimous Affection to the Publick Good, if Peace and Concord, if great numbers

bers of People in Health and Strength, if Fame and Reputation, if Fortitude and Courage, if Counsel and Conduct; if confidence of Success in all their Enterprises can raise and exalt the Glory of a Nation; then true Religion and Virtue, (serious Obedience to all the Laws of Christ) is the Exaltation of a Nation. For all these are the Fruits of Righteousness, as I have plainly demonstrated, when it is generally practised.

For so this Proposition is to be understood; *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, when that Nation (that is) becometh Righteous. The sole Virtue indeed of the Princes that govern it, may do much towards it. For *a King that sitteth in the Throne of Judgment*, (saith this wise Man) *scattereth away all Evil with his Eyes*, xx. 8. and again, vers. 26. *A wise King scattereth the Wicked*, and bringeth the *Wheel over them*; that is, punnisheth them severely. *Righteous Lips are the delight of Kings*, (i. e. of such wise Kings) and they love him that speaketh right, xvi. 13. They promote, that is, virtuous Men, not Flatterers, such as speak what is true, not what they think will please, unto places of Trust and Authority. And *when the Righteous are in Authority, the People rejoice*: *But when the wicked bear Rule, the People mourn*, xxix. 2.

But though all this be true, yet it is because such Princes are the blessed Instruments of reforming a Nation, (which begins in reforming the Court, and those who are in Authority) by *whole general Amendment*, by the Peoples becoming

coming truly Religious and Vertuous, this Observation of the wise Man is compleatly fulfilled, that Righteousness exalteth a Nation; by the very natural Effects of it, when it is heartily and universally practised.

But these, though very great Advantages in themselves, are small in comparison with that which follows, viz. *The singular Favour and Blessing of the Divine Providence*, which is procured by the Righteousness of a Nation.

For the understanding of which, it must be considered, that the Providence of God is the *great and first Mover*, which turns about all the Wheels of Humane Affairs, and orders how and whether they shall go: Whereby they are many times carried far otherwise than we design and contrive. This is a Truth so often noted in this Book, that from thence we may conclude it is a Matter of very great Moment; for it is not easy to number all the Places. *xvi. 1. The Preparations of the Heart in Man, and the answer of the Tongue, is from the Lord;* who gives, that is, what Success he pleases to Mens Deliberations and Discourses. And, *Ver. 9. A Man's Heart deviseth his Way,* (i. e. designs an End, and the Means to it) *but the Lord directeth his steps,* to such an issue, perhaps, as he never thought of. And again, *ver. 33. of the same Chapter, The Lot is cast into the Lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* The same we read, *xix. 25.)*

21. There are many Devices in a Man's Heart; nevertheless the Counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. And, xx. 24. Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a Man then understand his own way? That is, as no Man can take one step towards any thing he designs, without permission from above: So it is impossible for him to know what the Success will be of that which he projects. xxi. 1. *The King's Heart* (on whose motions, we know, the Fate of Kingdoms depend) is in the Hand of the Lord, as the Rivers of Water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. Once more, Ver. 30, 31. of. the same Chapter; There is no Wisdom, nor Understanding, nor Counsel against the Lord. The Horse is prepared against the Day of Battel; but safety is of the Lord; i. e. Whatsoever warlike Preparations any Prince shall make, though never so great, and never so well conducted and managed, all is to no purpose, unless the L O R D favour his Arms, and give good success to his Counsels and Designs.

Which is the very Ground and Reason of our meeting here this day, to implore his Blessing upon their Majesties and their Forces, by Sea and Land: Whereby we make a solemn acknowledgment of the Truth of what I have now said; that the disposal of all Events depends upon the Providence of God: Which we ought, therefore, by all means to engage to be on our Side. Particularly by humble, and fervent, and frequent Prayer to him: Which the Holy Scripture calls *seeking the Face*, that is, the Favour of God; who alone can make our way prosperous; and in whose fear

(as

(as this wise Man speaks, xiv. 26.) is strong Confidence, of good Success, that is, in all Enterprizes, and Protection in all Dangers.

But if we have any serious belief of God, and of his Providence, we cannot imagine that it can be engaged to favour us, by our Prayers alone. They must never be omitted; but if we address our selves to God, with no resolutions of amendment, this very wise Man hath told us our Doom, in the xv. 8. *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an abomination to the Lord; He will reject it,* especially when he brings it with a wicked Mind, (xxi. 27.) as if he thought, by his Sacrifices, to bribe the Divine Majesty, and persuade him to wink at his Sins. But, on the other side, he tells us in the very same Breath, *The Prayer of the Upright is his delight:* Which he repeats in the 29th Verse, *The Lord is far from the Wicked; but he heareth the Prayer of the Righteous.* Who devoutly acknowledging the Divine Providence, and also studying sincerely to observe his Commands; prevail with him to give them what they desire, his Favour, Protection, and Blessing, to prosper them in all their Undertakings.

The Wicked worketh a deceitful Work: but to him that stroketh Righteousness shall be a sure Reward. He deceives himself, that is, who thinks to raise himself to Greatness by wicked Devices; in which he may prosper a while, but the Event at last will disappoint his Expectations. When truly religious Men shall infallibly reap the Fruit of their pious, just, and charitable Labours for the good of others.

others. The like we read, xii. 3. *A Man shall not be established by Wickedness; but the Root of the Righteous shall not be moved.* And here in this Chapter, Vers. 11. *The House of the Wicked shall be overthrown; but the Tabernacle of the Righteous shall flourish.* There was a great difference between an *House* and a *Tabernacle*; the former being built strong and firm, to endure for an Age or several Generations; but the other (*a Tabernacle*) was reared up only for a Time, slightly jointed and put together, to be taken down and carried, on a sudden, any whither. And such is the Providence of God, the wise Man observes, over the Righteous, that he makes his weak Tabernacle abide and flourish; when the very House of the Wicked not only decays, but is overthrown. Thus the World hath seen many Potent Princes put down from their Seat, and small ones raised up in their stead; according to the discourse of the pious Father of this wise Man, who bids us mark what he saith, *Psalm. xxxiii.* where, after he had said, *Vers. 16. 17. There is no King saved by the multitude of an Host: a mighty Man is not delivered by much strength.* An Horse is a vain thing to save a Man, &c. He adds immediately, *Vers. 18. Behold, take notice of this, the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him,* (of such he will take a special care, and exercise a most tender and watchful Providence over them) *upon them that hope in his Mercy: to deliver their Soul from Death, and to keep them alive in time of Famine:* To preserve them, that is, in the greatest Dangers, and deliver them out of the greatest Straits.

And

And truly the Providence of God is in justice ingaged to give Countenance and Encouragement to true Piety and Virtue in the World. And though it do not move always so swiftly as we expect and desire, yet we may observe there have been such Revolutions of Providence in all Nations, in one Age or other, as have sufficiently demonstrated how much God concerns himself, to bleſſ those who live in observance of him, and to punish those who do otherwise.

I will not presume, now that it is time to draw towards a Conclusion, to lay before you the story of the Jews, over whom this wise King reigned; but only say, that as God had chosen them, from among all Nations, to be his People, planted them in a chosen Land, and blessed them with wise and holy Laws, promised them all manner of Felicity, upon condition of their Obedience: So, notwithstanding this peculiar relation to him, the faine Providence which promised them Protection, Safety and Prosperity, if they obeyed him, threatened to abandon them unto inevitable Ruin, if they forsook him and rebelled against him. Whence those remarkable words, *Deut. v. 29. O that there were such an Heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my Commandments always, that it might be well with them, &c.* Where he speaks as if it were not in his own Power to bless them, unless they would fear and obey him always; because God cannot do that at all, which he cannot do consistently with his Wisdom, Justice, and Honour.

And

And however Divine Providence may please to order things in those Nations who are not so nearly related to him ; yet we cannot but think he will deal with us Christians, who are now become what they were, *his peculiar People*, by the very same Measures he dealt with them ; that is, Bless us, or Curse us, according as we observe or break his Holy Laws.

But I see no reason to question his making this distinction even among Infidels, who know not the Laws of Jesus Christ : if we may judge of what he doth now, by what he did in ancient times. When the Heathens themselves observed this difference, as appears by the Writers of the *Roman Story* : who take notice, that while they were strict observers of the Law of Nations, and continued Religious, frugal, industrious, sober, and moderate, (as they were in their beginning) God's Blessing rested upon them, and they prospered wonderfully, whithersoever they went. But when they grew impious, luxurious, broke their Faith, abounded with all manner of Vice, they soon dwindled, grew weak, and lost their large Dominions they had in the World. And had they been at the first rise of their Empire, as vain as the *Greeks*, (to use the Words of a great Divine of our own, in the days before us,) as Luxurious as the *Assaticks*, as Perfidious as the *Carthaginians*, as uncivil and Barbarous as many other Nations, whom they conquer'd ; they could not have been so constantly fortunate in their Enterprizes, at home and abroad, as they were for many years.

Dr. Jackson.

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one Gbd; indeed, is a debtor to no body: but such is his Bounty, such his love to Righteousness, of whatsoever sort it be, That he will not suffer moral Virtue, civil Justice, Honesty and Truth, and constant execution of Laws, which in their kind and degree are good, to be wholly unrewarded: But by such means any Nation in the World may be exalted above those who are otherwise disposed.

How much more then may Christian People expect this Favour from the Lord, in the faithful observance of his holy Laws? Did true Righteousness, for instance, prevail in this Christian Kingdom, what an happy People might we be? As happy, as we have made our selves notorious to all the World, for the Punishments God hath inflicted on us.

What were the late Civil Wars, and the woful Effects of them, but the Calamities which God sent upon a sinful People, for our disobedience to him? And since the wonderful Restoration of the Royal Family and the Monarchy; What were the Pestilence, the Fire, and other Judgments, which presently ensued, but tokens of God's continued displeasure against us, for our abuse of his loving-kindness? We sot upon his Mercies; *We waxed fat and kicked against him;* we abandon'd our selves to Lust, Pride, and Idleness, and to all manner of Debauchery; *and* may, to Irreligion, Atheism and Infidelity: for which cause those heavy Calamities fell upon us. And what was the effect of them? After we had felt the smart of so many terrible Judgments, we fell into such

im-

implacable Animosities, and deadly Hatreds one against another, that we drew upon our selves the greatest Plague of all, that of *Papery*. Which had set up its *Chappels, Schools, and Convents* among us; and, had not God's Mercy prevented by our late marvellous Deliverance, would have brought in those, *Whipps, and Gibbets, and Racks, and Fires*, and other Instruments of Cruelty, wherewith we have seen it, torturing the Bodies and Souls of innumerable good Men and Women, in *France*, and in other places. And shall we still adventure to continue an unreformed Nation, because God hath spared us from utter ruine? After all this is come upon us, for our evil Deeds, as Ezra speaks, and for our great Trespass, and after he hath given us such a Deliverance as this, which we have lately received, shall we again break his Commandments? What a strange thing will it be, not to believe our own Experience, though we would not believe God's Holy Word? Which now, one would think, should have greater credit with us, when we have seen it so fully verified in our selves, that *Sin is a reproach to any People*. Which, in reason, should move us to try the Truth of the other part of my Text, of which I have now treated; and by working Righteousnes, satisfy our selves how it will exalt us. As I have proved it will, not only by its own natural Consequences (there being no Virtue, which tends not to greater a Nation that lives in the practice of it) but by the special Blessing of the Almighty; whose Method this is, which he constantly observes,

serves, to bless the righteous, and compass him with his favour as with a shield.

Hear this Wise-man once more, *Prov. x. 29.*

*The way of the Lord is strength to the upright; but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity. The way of the Lord, that is, this is the divine Method to give strength and power to upright men: or the very observance of the Rules of virtue (which may be meant here by the way of the Lord) the keeping close to God's Laws, and walking in his ways, inspires the Upright with courage and resolution, when any evil threatens them: but the workers of iniquity are feeble and poor spirit-ed; and shall be broken in pieces by that destruction, which is coming upon them. His Father gives the reason of it, *Psal. xii. ult.* The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.*

Let us love righteousness then, that we may be beloved of the Lord. And if we have any Authority, let upright men have our countenance and favour (as the glory and strength of the Nation, the Chariots and Horse-men for the safeguard of their Country) that the righteous Lord may countenance us in all our ways and proceedings, and we may find him propitious to us on all occasions.

That's the use we ought to make of what hath been said. Now we are going to consider another point, which is, how to apply these truths to ourselves.

I. First, Let every one of us, being convinced of these Truths, and seriously reflecting on them, resolve to consult the safety and happiness of the Kingdom, of which we are Members; by betaking

our selves hereafter to a religious course of life, in all holiness and righteousness all our days. Let us begin it this day; by making it a day, not only of humiliation, but of serious and unfeigned repentance. Let it conclude in solemn Resolutions of amendment of life. That, as by Wickedness this Nation hath been laid low, and made desppicable in the eyes of all our Neighbours; who neither loved nor feared us, because we had forsaken both our own, and their true Interest: so we may raise the Reputation of it, and make it great, eminent and illustrious, by the faithful practice of true Religion and Virtue.

2. And let us not only *make* this Resolution, but *make it good*: by calling it often to mind; by representing to our selves the advantages of sincere piety, even in this present life; by settling this persuasion in our mind, that it is the Interest of the Nation to be religious. Which cannot fail to sway our affection to it: and what we love, we always pursue till we have attained it. If we love then our selves, if we love our Nation, if we love their Majesties, our Government, our Countrey; we shall love righteousness.

3. And since Righteousness exalts a Nation, it is our interest to do all we can to *exalt righteousness*, and advance it to the greatest height; by being zealous of good works. We have been very zealous for things of little moment, in comparison with the weighty matters of God's Laws; very zealous to undo one another, and to ruine our Countrey. Let us now be as zealous for our common safety and preservation, by bending our most earnest endeavours

deavours, to provoke one another to love and to good works ; to be sincerely good our selves, and to make others so likewise, as much as lies in our power : That is, devoutly pious ; strictly just and merciful ; temperate and sober ; diligent and industrious in our several Callings and Offices ; publick spirited ; zealously concerned for the common good ; kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love ; forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any ; as earnest against revenge, as perhaps we have been for it ; studying the things that make for peace ; labouring to convince men of their errors, with the meekness of wisdom ; bearing with those whom we cannot convince ; by no means quarrelling one with another about different Opinions : but joining with one heart, and one Soul, for the defence of our Religion, and our Countrey ; our Laws and Liberties.

Then we may promise to our selves the Divine Protection and Blessing : God will make us great and powerful : and we shall tread upon the necks of our Enemies. He will hear our Prayers which we have now made unto him (and I hope will continue to make every day, because nothing, as you have heard, can prosper without his Blessing) for the safety of Their Majesties, and the Success of Their Arms, in Their present great Undertaking for the necessary defence of Their People. We need not fear what man can do unto us ; no, nor fear the arrows of the Almighty, I mean the raging Pestilence ; nor devouring Fire ; nor that Flood neither, which St. John saw the Dragon pour out of his mouth, to drown the Church ; that is, *Popish Persecution*.

That grand Oppressor, who hath raised himself by methods, quite contrary to this of *Solomon*; and, as if he intended to disprove the truth of God's word, hath indeavoured to exalt his Nation, by nothing but Fraud and Forgery, Perfidiousness and Perjury, by breaking his Faith, and violating Leagues and Solemn Treaties, by Wrong and Robbery, nay, by the utmost degree of Cruelty and Barbarity; this haughty Oppressor, I say, who hath ruin'd many other Countries as well as his own, shall not be able to hurt us: But God will succeed their Majesties in the War wherein we are now engaged against him, and make them go on prosperously, *because of truth, meekness and righteousness.*

For since that Nation hath so highly affronted the Divine Majesty (as well as abused all Mankind with whom they have had to do), as sure as God is in Heaven, he will lay them low: because they have been so Atheistical, as to advance themselves by all manner of Falshood and Treachery, Injustice and Cruelty; having mockt at those Virtues (*Truth and Honesty, &c.*) without which the World cannot subsist, but must be turned into a Wildernes.

We cannot appoint Times and Seasons unto the Almighty Wisdom: but if the universal desire of all Nations could prevail with God, we might be confident the time is come, wherein he will bring down the high looks of the proud (if I may apply the words of the *Psalmist* to this matter) and save the poor afflicted people, upon whom he hath trampled with scornful pride and cruelty.

He and his Adherents cannot long prosper, one would think, by such impious Politicks, as they have practised: but *the righteous Lord, who sitteth in the Throne, judging right*; will make all the World see by the judgment he will execute upon them, that *he loveth the righteous; but the wicked and him that liveth violence, his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be their portion to drink.*

But suppose God should defer this Vengeance for some time, and suffer him to be a further scourge to a sinful World; nay, should let him be the *rod of his anger* to chastise us for our ingratitude to him: yet these three things are certainly true.

1. *First*, That he will not always bear with impious Oppressors: but *though hand join in hand* (as Solomon speaks, xi. 21. though one oppressor join to help another) *the wicked shall not go unpunished.*

2. And that Punishment will be very terrible when it comes. For *though mercy will soon pardon the meanest* (as it is in the Book of Wisdom, vi. 4.) *yet mighty men shall be mightily tormented;* because being Ministers of his Kingdom, they abused his Power, and that wantonly; having abundant means to please themselves, without doing the least hurt unto others.

3. And this Comfort, in the mean time, may be administered unto all those who have amended their lives, and grown better by God's former Judgments, or by our late Deliverance; that they will find God favourable unto them, to protect and deliver them, in *the needful time of trouble*, should it please

please him to let it come again to try them. So we are assured by this Wise-man; who hath left us Instructions of this kind also. You may find a great many together in the beginning of the Eleventh Chapter, v. 3, 4, 5, 6. which are all I shall mention : *The integrity of the upright shall guide them ; but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. Riches profit not in the day of wrath ; but righteousness delivereth from death. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way ; but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them ; but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.* The Sense of all which is this, That the highest Wisdom, is to be sincerely good. There is no Policy, comparable to perfect Integrity : Which in difficult times will guide and direct a man unto the surest way for his preservation : When nothing else will secure him ; but contrary Courses inevitably lead him unto his ruin.

God, of his Infinite Mercy, grant, That as we understand these things, so we may consider them, and lay them to heart ; yea, lay them up in our heart, and reflect upon them as frequently as they are repeated in this Book ; that we may make them the rule of our actions, and trust to them as the most certain way to Safety and Security (if not Prosperity) in this World ; as well as to Eternal Felicity in a better Life.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 4. l. 1, 2. x. this word. Pag. 13. l. 10. r. Neighbours.

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